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AUTHOR	Komissar, Cheska; Hart, Debra; Friedlander, Robin
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ABSTRACT

This booklet discusses how to recruit and manage volunteers with disabilities. Generic as well as specific strategies are provided for engaging individuals with disabilities, including members of diverse cultures. Potential barriers and suggestions for working around those barriers are also explored. The first section addresses recruitment and provides tips for recruiting individuals with disabilities through fliers, community contacts, group presentations, and the media. Using "people first" language when recruiting or working with individuals with disabilities, transportation issues, and tips for developing a recruitment plan are also discussed. A volunteer interest survey is provided. Following this, sections deal with orientation and training for volunteers, matching volunteers with and without disabilities, questions of liability (including obtaining insurance, establishing safety procedures, training volunteers and staff, becoming familiar with local laws, and building relationships), challenges (including burnout, firing, and lack of enthusiasm), and coordinating volunteers. Information is provided on evaluating training, providing disability awareness training to volunteers without disabilities, and the qualities and skills of a good coordinator. The manual ends with a list of 101 ways to give recognition to volunteers and a list of 28 ways for a volunteer to help. (CR)

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Utilizing All Your Resources:

Individuals With and Without Disabilities Volunteering Together

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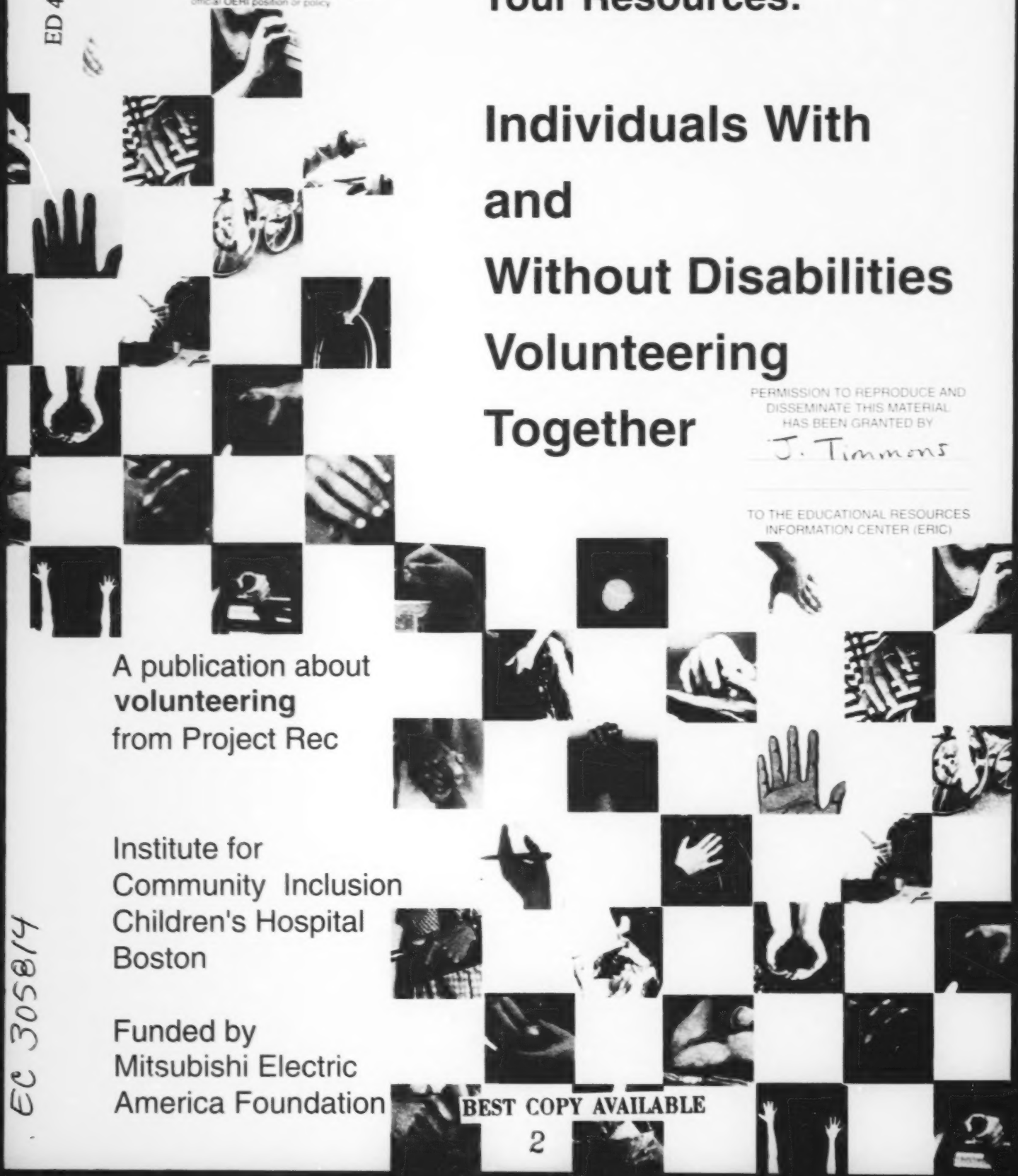

A publication about **volunteering** from Project Rec

Institute for Community Inclusion
Children's Hospital
Boston

Funded by
Mitsubishi Electric
America Foundation

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Utilizing All Your Resources: Individuals With and Without Disabilities Volunteering Together

A publication about volunteering
from Project REC

Cheska Komissar
Debra Hart
Robin Friedlander

Institute for Community Inclusion, UAP
Children's Hospital, Boston

Funded by
Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation
816 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Suite 100
Washington, D.C. 20006

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Karen Zimbrich, Children's Hospital, Boston, MA
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This project was made possible through the generous funding of
Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation.
With the assistance of this manual and support of human service agencies,
it is hoped that more companies (and individuals!)
will follow in the footsteps of Mitsubishi
and encourage their employees
to volunteer together with individuals with disabilities
to enrich their own communities.

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Introduction

Volunteerism has always been a part of American community life; our history includes countless examples of people volunteering together for common goals. Approximately one hundred million Americans volunteer their time and talent through a variety of activities and organizations. However, despite this high number, both large and small organizations still feel a shortage of people power.

One group of individuals that has been largely overlooked as potential volunteers is people with disabilities. Although recruiting people with disabilities will not eliminate the shortage of volunteers, it could certainly diminish it.

This does not mean that people with disabilities should be asked to volunteer for jobs that other people get paid to do—no one should be asked to do that. However, it does mean that it is time to begin looking at individuals with disabilities as people with valuable, skilled resources rather than as those who are able to participate only on the receiving end of services.

Recruiting and managing volunteers with disabilities should follow much the same strategies as recruiting any volunteers; but some specific strategies exist that may be helpful when targeting different groups of individuals. This manual will discuss generic as well as specific strategies for individuals with disabilities, including members of diverse cultures. Potential barriers and suggestions for working around those barriers will also be explored.

Recruiting Volunteers

Methods of Recruiting

- **fliers**
- **community contacts**
- **group presentations**
- **media**

Fliers

A primary step in recruiting volunteers is developing a recruiting flier. It should be concise, using large print and/or an eye-catching graphic. You can post the flier in places where many people will see it—for example, on college campuses.

When making a flier:

- consider using brightly colored paper or a logo to catch people's attention
- create the main caption so that it is large enough to be legible from five or ten feet away (use bold, large print)
- organize text in blocks, with a lot of blank space
- utilize attractive, readable fonts
- highlight important points with bullets and bold or italicized texts
- translate materials into other languages to recruit volunteers from diverse cultures
- ultilize graphics which represent individuals from diverse cultures
- include a statement such as **individuals with disabilities welcome!**

Places to look for volunteers:

- college student affairs office
- school guidance center
- relevant college departments (e.g., psychology, education, human services, social work)
- residential services
- college or high school internship programs
- senior centers
- school-based community service groups
- technical schools
- independent living centers
- high school honor society
- high school counselors
- recreation departments
- Mutual Assistance Association
- business/professional associations
- homemaker's club
- Parent Teacher Organization
- Elks Club
- Kiwanis Club
- Rotary Club
- Council on Aging
- local places of worship
- volunteer referral agencies
- United Way
- multicultural organizations
- senior citizen groups
- Chamber of Commerce
- local companies
- sororities
- fraternities
- Easter Seals
- Department of Mental Retardation
- Boy and Girl Scouts

Community Contacts

You can contact local agencies and schools by phone to recruit individual volunteers or to discuss getting multiple people involved. You can then explain your program and what you are looking for in a volunteer. Follow up on your phone calls with a letter, including fliers with a "please post" note attached.

Although making phone calls can be tedious, it is worth it to establish the personal contact. Your effort will pay off in the long run.

Group Presentations

The most effective way to recruit volunteers is through presentations to groups in which the members are likely to show interest. These presentations can be scheduled during class time, club meeting time, staff meetings, after religious services or at a multicultural agency's social activity, and so on. Working with a trusted individual from the agency, school or organization as a co-presenter can help to establish your credibility. Your presentation should be brief—5 to 10 minutes (15 minutes maximum!) and should include:

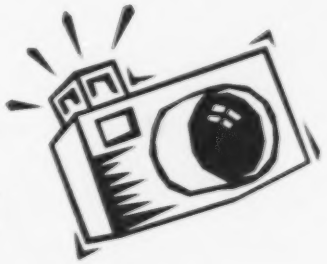
- introduction of yourself and your agency or purpose
- description of volunteer positions
- discussion of the benefits of participation (e.g., meeting new people, providing a service, developing a community, becoming part of an organization, gaining personal or job experience)
- information about what you are looking for in a volunteer (especially time commitment)
- a statement telling whether previous experience is necessary
- allotment of time for a question and answer period
- conclusion to thank the group for their time and interest

While you are talking, you may pass around a sign-up sheet on which people can fill in their name, phone number and address. Let them know that signing the sheet means only that they want more information and that you will call them personally to discuss it further. Make it clear that signing up does not commit them in any way. They should sign up even if they are only slightly interested.

Although individuals *can* call you, you are likely to recruit more volunteers if *you* are the one who makes the initial call.

Media

Finally, you can use the media to recruit people. Many local newspapers, radio stations and cable channels are more than willing to run public service announcements free of charge or at a reduced price. Additionally, television stations often have local talk shows—a chance for you to be very specific about your program and what you are looking for in a volunteer. Local public access cable TV shows may offer a similar opportunity. And don't forget to utilize media that markets to other cultures (e.g., Southeast Asian newspapers, Latino television)—they will typically translate your materials for you.



A word of caution—large-scale recruiting through the media or through unplanned placement and distribution of fliers, although effective, limits your ability to target specific groups of individuals as volunteers. You may end up having to interview many volunteers who are simply not right for the job. Not everyone makes a good volunteer.

Employees from Horizon Research, Inc., a division of Mitsubishi, and local residents with cognitive disabilities got together for a volunteer project in Boston. Christmas in April is an annual program where volunteers rehabilitate homes for people who are elderly and/or cannot afford to have the work done themselves. This group spent ten hours painting, building a deck and hauling away years worth of yard debris.

Tips for Recruiting Individuals with Disabilities

Historically, people with disabilities have experienced discrimination in all aspects of community life, including volunteerism. It may therefore be necessary to reach out specifically to this group of individuals for a response. Although you may have to put in a bit more effort, you will receive a rewarding pay-off in the form of gaining previously untapped human resources.

- Recruiting materials should include alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, tape, closed captioning for TV, descriptive video
- Recruiting materials must include a statement that people of all abilities and ethnic groups are welcome
- When interviewing volunteers, ask if they need any special assistance to be able to participate (e.g., a little extra assistance in learning about their responsibilities, or being placed only at wheelchair-accessible sites)
- As part of the application process, include a question regarding carpooling for those individuals who may need some assistance with transportation (see page 11)
- Offer to meet with groups of individuals—perhaps at a group home, Independent Living Center or a multicultural agency)—in order to discover exactly how their needs and yours might mesh

Recruiting individuals with disabilities is much the same as recruiting others; however, your targeted areas for fliers, mailings and the like may be different. The following is a list of organizations that might exist in your community and assist you in identifying the people they serve. Although they do not typically give out address lists, they may print an article or advertisement in a newsletter, assist you to arrange a presentation and/or post or mail fliers.

- advocacy agencies (see the yellow pages under "advocacy")
- The Arc (an advocacy organization for people with cognitive disabilites)
- bicultural social service agencies

- counseling centers
- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Mental Retardation
- disability offices at colleges
- disability-specific support groups (can be found by inquiring at other organizations listed)
- Easter Seal Society
- English as a Second Language (ESL) classes
- health care clinics
- high school guidance offices
- hospitals
- Independent Living Centers
- mutual assistance associations
- organizations serving individuals from diverse cultures
- rehabilitation agencies
- special education departments
- Special Olympics
- state schools and institutions
- United Cerebral Palsy Association

Important Note:
When recruiting volunteers with disabilities, it is important not to overlook individuals from other cultures who have disabilities. Several of the suggestions above may help you to reach these individuals, but a call to your local Office for Refugee Resettlement can lead you to additional diverse groups.

Finally, many organizations provide volunteers to assist people with disabilities in places such as group homes, state schools, and so on. However, these volunteer organizations may consider combining the efforts of their volunteers with the individuals from the group homes or state schools and *volunteering together* for other activities to better the community.

In other words:
Individuals from a volunteer organization can volunteer **with** people with disabilities instead of **for** people with disabilities. The scenario on page 8 depicts one example of this. For more information about people with and without disabilities volunteering together, refer to pages 17 through 20.

Watch Your Language

When recruiting or working with individuals with disabilities it is important to choose your words carefully. Remember that *people* are not disabilities and should always be recognized as people first. If you must refer to an individual's disability use "people first" language (***an individual*** who uses a wheelchair, ***a person*** with epilepsy, ***he*** has cerebral palsy). Mentioning the disability first (the cerebral palsied person) defines the individual in terms of his/her disability rather than making the individual more important than the disability (as in, Fred, who has cerebral palsy. . .).

Words to Avoid:	*Better Choices:*
wheelchair-bound person	person who uses a wheelchair
epileptic	person with epilepsy; person who has seizures
retard	individual with a cognitive disability
the disabled	individuals with disabilities
blind person	person with blindness; person with vision difficulties
deaf/dumb person	person with deafness; person who is deaf/hard of hearing; person who cannot speak
spastic	individual who has "x" (name of disability)
stricken with . . .	individual who has "x" (name of disability)
cripple	individual with a disability

Avoid using the words victim, afflicted with, suffers from, invalid (which literally means "not valid"), defective, unfortunate, pitiful, deformed or all other judgmental, stereotyping words.

Take care when using terms such as courageous, inspirational, brave or overcoming all odds. A successful individual with a disability might not necessarily fit these descriptors.

Most important: Although the rhyme says "names can never hurt you," they can and frequently do. Choose your words with care.

With instead of *For*

A group of employees from Horizon Research, Inc., a subsidiary of Mitsubishi Electric America, decided that they wanted to volunteer for people with disabilities at a local group home. They were interested in sponsoring parties at the group home, building bookshelves for the group home, or perhaps giving the home a new paint job.

A representative from Horizon met with a human service agency to present their ideas. The agency, excited about the interest a large company was showing in the community, suggested that the employees volunteer *with* the people from the group home instead of *for* them. The Horizon employees thought this sounded wonderful and decided it would be best to paint the group home together with the residents of the group home. However, the employees soon realized that what the agency was recommending was to volunteer *together* for an activity that would enable the people living in the group home to participate *in the community*.

At first the employees at Horizon were nervous about meeting the individuals from the group home. They had always pictured individuals with disabilities as people needing assistance, not capable of giving assistance. However, after a joint meeting at a local pizza hangout, everyone soon forgot their nervousness and began to discuss the activities they might like to do.

Several people decided that they would join in a few activities together. Kevin, a man from the group home, participated in *Christmas in April* with a group of Horizon employees—one Saturday, they spent the entire day painting an elderly man's home, building a new deck for him and hauling away years worth of yard debris.

Horizon employees also joined forces with Kevin and others to clean up a local recreation area. As a result, Kevin not only got to know the people from Horizon Research better but he also met another individual with whom he has now become good friends. If the employees from Horizon had merely volunteered at the group home, Kevin would not have had the same opportunity to give to his community or make a new friend.

After a good deal of work with a local human service agency, one summer camp finally agreed to accept people with disabilities into their volunteer program. The camp staff began to understand the abilities of people with disabilities. Many volunteers were able to use their camp experience on their resumes to get jobs at camps and elsewhere. Pictured here are two counselors, one with a disability and one without.

Like the example on the previous page, businesses (as well as other organizations) are ideal places to find people who already volunteer and may be interested in volunteering together with people with disabilities. In order for this to happen, it is often helpful to complete a preliminary survey to determine interest and develop a list of potential volunteers. The following may be used as an initial survey for any group of individuals interested in volunteering.

Volunteer Interest Survey

I am most interested in volunteering for the following (please check all that apply):

- ❑ Cultural Activities (e.g., ushering at a concert, fundraising for the arts)
- ❑ Recreational Projects (e.g., coaching or sponsoring a sports team/activity)
- ❑ Youth (e.g., being a big brother/sister, sponsoring a camp scholarship fund)
- ❑ Senior Citizens (e.g., making social visits, organizing lecture series)
- ❑ Social Services (e.g., working at a soup kitchen, hospital)
- ❑ Civic Organizations (e.g., helping with the Elks Club, Scouts)
- ❑ Environment (e.g., conducting community cleanup, awareness week)
- ❑ Other _____

I would prefer to volunteer (please check all that apply):

- ❑ once a week
- ❑ once every other week
- ❑ once a month
- ❑ a few times a year
- ❑ once a year
- ❑ once
- ❑ not interested
- ❑ on weekends
- ❑ evenings
- ❑ individually
- ❑ with a small group of people from work
- ❑ with a small group of people from the community
- ❑ with a large group of people
- ❑ other _____

I would most enjoy volunteering:

- ❑ directly with people (e.g., helping run programs, making home visits)
- ❑ indirectly with people (e.g., doing office work, painting, carpentry)

Please contact me with more information:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

An Unlikely Volunteer

Joel was far past the age of attending summer camp yet still wanted to spend his summers in that environment. He decided to answer an advertisement he saw posted in the library for a summer camp volunteer. He called and found out that they were looking for experienced swimmers to assist at poolside as well as extra hands to help counselors. Having participated in Special Olympics swimming competitions for most of his life, Joel immediately applied for the pool position.

The camp director's initial reaction was quite negative. How would a person who is mentally retarded be able to give more to the camp than he would take? After all, this was a volunteer program, not a baby-sitting service! The camp needed a minimum of five experienced volunteers to assist campers with disabilities to become integrated into the camp. They didn't want volunteers who had disabilities themselves!

However, after a bit of discussion with Joel, his mother, and the local Arc (an advocacy organization for individuals with cognitive disabilities), the camp director relented and allowed Joel to volunteer on a trial basis—Joel would have to prove himself.

Joel stayed the entire summer. Initially his job was to help out in the pool for one hour per day, then assist a counselor in watching children during a free period. By the end of the first week, he proved to be so skillful at helping the fearful swimmers enter the water that the pool director requested his assistance full-time. Furthermore, halfway through the summer, when the counselors were burning out, Joel offered to teach dancing one period each day. Dancing?!? "Yes, I can do tap," he replied, to their astonishment. Joel really did know how to tap dance—quite well. Kids not only signed up for his activity but several counselors ended up as regulars too.

Perhaps there is a lesson here and perhaps not. Joel surpassed all expectations, but no one would have known had he not been given a chance. Looking at him and talking to him, one could not assess his abilities. He needed to try things out. It is important to note that Joel's summer experience wasn't perfect. One day he went to change in the locker room but forgot to put on his swimsuit before entering the pool area. The sky did not crash down. Another counselor reminded him and he did not forget again. Other people may have other strengths or their strengths may be more subtle than Joel's. More frequently than not, however, it is commitment, concerted effort, and a desire to *do* that makes a good volunteer.

But What About Transportation?

Individuals with disabilities and individuals from other cultures often say that transportation is one of the main barriers to community participation. Several transportation alternatives exist, including:

- **using public transportation**
- **hiring accessible transportation companies (fee for service, e.g., taxis)**
- **walking/buddy systems**
- **biking**
- **travel training (teaching an individual how to get from one place to another independently)**
- **relocating meetings to more central, accessible locations**

The following is one illustration of how to solve a transportation problem:

A local environmental advocacy group began a cleanup project and decided to include people with disabilities. However, they soon found that one of the biggest issues for many of the individuals they tried to recruit was transportation—people wanted to participate, but they could not drive and had no way to get to the cleanup sites. The environmental group decided to include the following question on their volunteer registration form: "Can we give out your name and phone number as someone who would be willing to carpool or assist other volunteers with transportation?" They also made it clear that each driver would be responsible for the safety of his/her passengers.

The organization developed a list of potential drivers and distributed it to those needing assistance with transportation. The positive feedback they got turned out to be much greater from individuals without disabilities! Assisting with transportation, even by simply providing a list of interested participants, is crucial for success. If your volunteers assist one another with transportation, be sure to include driver safety as part of the training information. Also make sure each driver understands that he/she is personally responsible for the passengers; the organization is not.

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Tips for Developing a Recruitment Plan

Before beginning the recruitment process, you must be clear about why you need volunteers and how you will use them.

Whether you are looking for one volunteer or one hundred, it is crucial to develop a volunteer recruitment plan. Although this plan may be developed independently, more ideas can be generated with the support of other local groups who also need volunteers. Brainstorm ideas by asking questions such as those listed below, then select strategies most likely to meet your specific needs.

1) For what activities will the volunteer(s) be used?

2) What type of person would want to take advantage of this volunteer opportunity? (age, skills, culture, etc.)

3) Where would we find this type of person? Where do they gather? Hang out? Recreate? Work? Go to school? What organizations do they belong to? What church/temple/mosque do they attend? What do they read (newspapers, magazines)? What radio stations do they listen to/television stations do they watch?

4) What will motivate these people to volunteer?

5) What can we say to them in our recruitment efforts? (What is our need? What is the job? What are the benefits to all involved? Do we need to present information in another language?)

6) Who can help us with recruiting?

7) Will we have to supervise volunteers ourselves or can we find other organizations to help provide supervision of recruits?

8) Which recruitment strategies will yield the best results? What options are best for our resources? Do we need to modify our strategies to encourage individuals from other cultures to volunteer?

(Adapted from: Essential Volunteer Management by Steve McCurley and Rick Lynch, VM Systems, 1989):

Orientation and Training

The type of orientation and training necessary for volunteers should be specific to the type of activity involved. Some activities require formal training sessions, such as sterilizing hospital equipment, whereas others call for informal "on-the-job" training, such as providing social visits to a nursing home. All volunteers should have some general information about the organization for which they will be volunteering, its philosophy, what is expected of a volunteer, and so on. The following areas may be included in either a formal or an informal training session:

- introduction to philosophy
- agency or program tour
- agency/program rules and regulations
- commitment and responsibility requirements
- liability concerns
- successful examples—especially those representing diversity

When working with people with disabilities, especially cognitive disabilities, it is important to make sure they understand every detail of what is expected of them. This, of course, holds true for **any** volunteers, with or without disabilities. Orientation and training may require a bit more time than you are accustomed to, but you will find that it is most beneficial for all volunteers, including those without disabilities. After training, the volunteers are noticeably more efficient and commited to the task. You will easily see how worthwhile it is to include the following details as part of your orientation and training package:

- Materials should be presented in written form, with illustrations or graphics when possible, and verbally.
- All instructions should be demonstrated as well as described.
- Training should be highly interactive, using a lot of examples and discussion.
- After you have presented all the details, ask the volunteers to demonstrate what they have learned by answering questions or demonstrating a task such as stuffing campaign envelopes or walking out the fire exit when an alarm sounds. Individuals will realize what they have learned, and trainers will gain information about areas in which they should concentrate.
- New volunteers might be paired with "old hands" to learn the system.
- If orientation/training is not possible, as in the case of a "one shot" deal such as a community cleanup, individuals needing a little more assistance can be paired with other volunteers, or volunteers can work in groups.

Training: Too Much or Too Little?

Too much training can result in:

- little opportunity for growth
- inappropriate use of volunteers' unique strengths
- "turning off" volunteers
- stereotypes

Too little training can result in:

- confusion
- wasted time
- low commitment levels
- inconsistent, incomplete or shoddy work

Finding a balance between over- and undertraining volunteers is tricky. With too little training, people have no idea what is expected of them; with too much, they lose interest.

Keeping a balance is especially important in volunteer situations that call for social interaction with others (e.g., in soup kitchens, when visiting homes for elderly individuals). One needs to provide enough training so that volunteers will know how to deal with a variety of situations, yet one does not want to provide so much training that the volunteers begin to stereotype individuals (e.g., all elderly individuals need to be spoken to in a loud voice) or treat them more as clients than equals.

Too much training often stifles volunteers who may have their own ideas or way of doing things. Always allow your volunteers some leeway, or at least listen to them and consider their ideas. Their experiences may contribute to your organization. Allow for flexibility. If volunteers feel that there is limited opportunity for growth or change in a system with which they are uncomfortable, they may lose their enthusiasm.

Likewise, too little training can cause a number of problems. Volunteers may be confused about their exact role and what is expected. This may result in wasted time for both the volunteer (trying to figure out what is expected or how to complete a task) and the project/organization (poor utilization of volunteers' time). Furthermore, if volunteers are confused or uncertain, they will be less likely to feel that they are a part of something important and will have difficulty making any type of commitment. Finally, too little training may result in work that is incomplete, poorly done, or inconsistent.

Going Fishing

Give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day—teach him to fish and he'll have food for a lifetime. Just an old cliché? Perhaps. But one that has a good deal of meaning when considering volunteer training. It is impossible to train a volunteer for every possible situation he/she might meet. Instead of attempting an all-encompassing training program, it is much more effective and efficient to concentrate on developing problem-solving skills for your volunteers to use.

Remember...
when it comes to working with people,
there are no formulas!

Preparing individuals for a wide variety of situations can best be accomplished through teaching problem solving rather than trying to cover all the possibilities. Providing exercises that include probable or actual situations and asking volunteers to brainstorm together to figure out multiple solutions will be helpful. Each solution can be shared with the group and its advantages and disadvantages discussed. Who knows—you may find some new ideas you had never thought of!

Role-playing activities can also assist volunteers in viewing situations from different sides. One suggestion for designing a role-play is to imagine two characters in a conflicting situation, for example, an older person would like assistance from a volunteer to get out of bed but the volunteer has been instructed not to provide that type of assistance. Next, jot down some vital information about both characters on two notecards (one character per card). Describe their conflict and how they each view the situation. Then, have two individuals act out the situation. Don't forget to discuss what occurred afterward. When writing role-plays, be sure to consider cultural differences. For example, in some cultures, women do not make eye contact with men. If your volunteers are aware of the variety of cultural traditions and behaviors of the people with whom they may come in contact, they may avoid problems.

Always encourage creative thinking and generating multiple answers to solving situations rather than getting the "right" answer.

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One way to ensure that training is effective is to have voluteers complete an evaluation after orientation and perhaps again several months into their commitment. The following is a sample that may be used and/or adapted for this purpose. Remember that some people cannot read or write. A verbal discussion of the evaluation may be helpful.

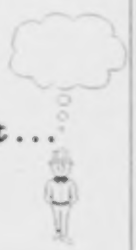
Taking Stock

(not to be confused with cattle rustling)

I didn't like . . . (just kidding)

The information presented was:

clear
unclear
so-so



I'm still confused about . . .

If I were running this training I would . . .

I will be able to use the information gained here by . . .

And furthermore . . .

. . . but will the people without disabilities still want to volunteer?

One fear about including people with disabilities in your volunteer efforts may be that individuals without disabilities may feel uncomfortable. This is rarely the case, perhaps because individuals who volunteer typically are caring individuals who are interested in meeting new people and having new experiences. Nonetheless, it may be necessary to provide some disability awareness training to the individuals without disabilities. Before automatically providing any training, however, the situation should be discussed with the individual who has a disability. Some individuals may feel that this only singles them out and would rather give information to people as they need it, while others may feel it is necessary in order for people to understand them or interact with them. It is best to follow these points when providing any type of disability awareness training:

- Always ask the person with the disability first.
- Listen to the individual with the disability even if you think you know better.
- Individuals with more severe disabilities who communicate nonvocally may need you to assist other volunteers in becoming familiar with the basics of their communication systems.
- Respect other cultural views of disabilities. For example, in some cultures, independence is not encouraged; in others it is simply not discussed. However, family "interdependence" may be highly valued.
- Make sure that volunteers do not become "teachers." Encourage "equal" relationships, which are best developed through experience rather than through formalized awareness training.

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Matching Volunteers With and Without Disabilities

One way to assist individuals with disabilities in volunteering is to form and utilize a buddy system. The following offers some ideas about how to do this:

If you...

work with individuals with disabilities: Try calling local service organizations and ask if you can meet with the volunteers to discuss the possibility of pairing them up with individuals with disabilities who have similar volunteer interests. Explain that any necessary training will be provided. Describe the benefits of the opportunity both for them and for the individuals with whom they will be matched.

belong to a volunteer organization: Discuss your desire to include individuals with disabilities with the entire group. Once you know who wants to be involved, try contacting group homes, independent living centers, special education departments, or adult service organizations such as the Department of Mental Retardation or the Arc. Begin matching people on the basis of their interests. Ask the individuals (or their parents or people who work with them) if any training will be necessary to work with them and who will provide it.

currently volunteer for individuals with disabilities: Try to discover what interests you share. Research existing volunteer efforts in your community. Find out which individuals might like to volunteer with you. Be sure to complete any necessary consent forms. It is sometimes difficult, especially if you volunteer for a residential program, to get permission to go off-site with the individual with the disability; however, with a bit of effort on your part, you can usually obtain permission. And who knows—you may start something new!

are just beginning a volunteer venture: Try contacting local special education departments, independent living centers, group homes or advocacy organizations such as the Department of Mental Retardation or the Arc, to invite an individual with a disability who has a similar interest in your venture to volunteer together with you.

These organizations, which typically provide volunteers for many different kinds of activities, are good places to find people for matching individuals with and without disabilities. Remember, this list is only a beginning!

Youth:
- Girl & Boy Scouts
- honor societies
- community service clubs (call school counselors/student information centers)
- Candy Stripers (hospitals)
- religious organizations
- young-adult groups from bicultural agencies
- sororities & fraternities

Adults:
- Knights of Columbus
- Rotary Club
- Elks Lodge
- homemakers groups
- Junior League
- Kiwanis Club
- religious organizations

It's a Match!

In some instances, it may be most helpful to pair up volunteers with and without disabilities. This is especially true for individuals who have more severe disabilities or who may need a little more help or time to learn what is expected of them. This type of match can be arranged during volunteer recruitment. For example, at interviews or on information forms, volunteers can be asked if they would like to volunteer with an individual with a disability who has similar interests. Someone with a disability who may need a little extra assistance, but who will be an asset to the program/organization, will have a ready pool of volunteer partners.

Before any assistance is given, make certain that the individual actually wants the assistance and determine exactly what type of assistance is desired. It is also vital to keep in mind that assistance may be offered but should never be forced. Individuals tend to know their limitations and accepting assistance should be up to them. Offering too much assistance can be counterproductive and may result in a lack of use of an individual's full potential as a volunteer. The following list includes areas in which individuals with disabilities **might** need assistance:

- maneuvering a wheelchair
- learning a task
- becoming familiar with a building
- meeting new people or situations
- getting a drink
- reading information
- completing written forms
- carrying heavy items
- finding a work space
- taking a break (when? where?)
- locating restrooms
- getting from one place to another
- making a phone call
- teaching others how to communicate with the individual

Please note:

It is only necessary to consider additional support for the volunteer if the volunteer activity does not naturally lend the needed support. For example, if all individuals are given a tour of an area, an individual with a physical disability may not need any extra assistance unless accessibility is anissue. On the other hand, an individual with a cognitive disability may need to go over the tour two or three times before knowing his/her way around. It is quite easy to jump to the conclusion that because an individual has a disability, extra assistance will be necessary. This is often not the case!

A volunteer from Horizon Research, Inc. and a local youth with a cognitive disability clean up yard debris during Christmas in April.

Questions of Liability

A major concern of many organizations that use volunteers is liability. Although organizations should be concerned about the issue of liability and volunteers, the specific issue of disability should not cause any special concern as liability is the same for individuals with and without disabilities. Whenever volunteers are concerned, some general rules apply:

- **obtain insurance**
- **establish safety procedures**
- **train volunteers and staff**
- **become familiar with local laws**
- **build relationships**

Insurance

It is crucial that an organization is properly insured. Insurance that covers volunteers without disabilities also covers those volunteers who have disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act prevents any insurance company from discriminating against an organization, where liability is concerned, merely because the organization involves individuals with disabilities. Coverage decisions will be based on basic principles of insurance risk classification, not on disability. An insurance company must show legitimate risk before raising rates. Further, each decision must be individualized for the specific situation and not generalized for certain categories of disabilities. There is a *slight* possibility that you may end up with higher insurance rates, but the payback in terms of increasing your volunteer pool will be well worth it. If you think your insurance company is discriminating on the basis of a disability, you may file a complaint with:

The United States Department of Justice
P.O. Box 66118
Washington, D.C. 20035

Procedures

All organizations must have a set of standard safety procedures. Volunteers are also must become familiar with these procedures. If two individuals are volunteering together, at least one of them should be familiar with all safety procedures. These procedures should be written clearly, with illustrations when possible, and posted. This is not merely a safety precaution for organizations utilizing volunteers, but rather sound practice for operating safe and effective organizations.

Training

No matter how good the reputation of an organization is, if it does not provide training to its volunteers, the risks of problems such as injuries or lawsuits are greatly increased. For detailed information about training, please refer to "Orientation and Training," on page 13.

Building Relationships

The importance of building good will between an organization and its volunteers cannot be underestimated. Strong, long-lasting relationships greatly decrease the chances of a lawsuit should an accident occur. Volunteers provide valuable services to organizations. The individuals within the organization must communicate their appreciation to their volunteers. Furthermore, if a volunteer experiences an accident or other unfortunate event, it is crucial that the leaders of the organization immediately react by offering assistance to the individual. Efforts to build a relationship of mutual respect and appreciation benefit the organization and increase the satisfaction of each volunteer. (Refer to page 32 for tips on expressing appreciation.)

Solutions to liability issues are the same for everyone, regardless of ability:

- **provide training**
- **stay on good terms with volunteers**
- **get insurance**

Common Questions and Answers

Questions of liability are decided based on a variety of federal, state and local laws and regulations. The following general statements are intended to apply in all areas and to provide an introduction only. If you have specific questions, you should contact one of the parties identified at the end of this section.

The following questions and answers are printed with permission and are adapted from *Answers to Volunteers' Liability and Insurance Questions*, produced by the Nonprofits' Risk Management Center, 1001 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 900, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Are volunteers protected from lawsuits?

Our legal system allows lawsuits against almost everyone, although many states have passed laws that make it harder to win a suit against a volunteer. There are currently no federal laws applying to all volunteers; however, many states have rules limiting the liability of volunteers.

As a volunteer, can I be sued?

In states that do not have volunteer protection laws, lawsuits are based on injuries resulting from "negligence." Legally, this means not acting with the care that a reasonable person would have used. However, states with volunteer protection laws bar suits unless harm results from something more than negligence, such as gross negligence, recklessness, or willful and wanton misconduct. Additionally, the organization for which you are volunteering may protect volunteers with insurance and indemnification (an undertaking by the organization to pay legal costs and any settlement or judgment).

If my organization includes volunteers with disabilities, aren't we liable?

Any organization that uses volunteers should have adequate insurance and safety procedures that cover all volunteers. It is crucial that you know what types of coverage *your* insurance policy includes. If, for example, your policy excludes coverage for volunteers, you should not be using either volunteers with disabilities or those without before seeking alternative coverage. Liability insurance that covers volunteers will also cover those volunteers with disabilities. However, insurance companies should be informed about volunteers with disabilities to avoid a potential argument later about coverage.

What insurance should an organization have regarding volunteers?

Depending on what responsibilities a volunteer has, an organization may need one of four major types of policies: general liability, auto, directors and officers, and professional malpractice.

General Liability

The general liability policy, often in the form of a "package policy" that includes property insurance, is the most common and the most inclusive type of insurance. To determine whether a policy covers volunteers, check the definition of "insured." This definition should specifically list "volunteers." If not, check the endorsements at the back of the policy to see if one includes volunteers.

Although it can be quite broad, the general liability policy is not truly comprehensive. Specifically excluded are claims arising from auto accidents, some board decisions, professional services, and a variety of other activities. Separate policies must be obtained for those purposes.

Some organizations purchase a special volunteer liability policy. This coverage may be even better than inclusion in the organization's general liability policy because it provides independent protection and it may have broader terms.

Auto

Financial responsibility for motor vehicle accidents lies primarily with the owner of the vehicle. Most states require every vehicle owner to carry liability insurance in at least some amount. Many organizations rely on an

individual's coverage up to his/her policy limits. However, an additional policy owned by the organization may be desirable.

Personal auto policies may exclude the commercial operation of a van or bus, especially if a special driver's license is needed to operate the vehicle. Also, an organization may purchase a nonowned auto policy or excess insurance to increase the limits over personal auto insurance.

Directors and Officers

Directors and officers insurance covers harm resulting from making policy and managing the affairs of an organization—"management errors" may be a more descriptive name. This coverage may be confused with a general liability policy because a single incident may result in claims under both policies. For example, an accident that caused bodily injury may be covered under the general liability policy, even if the director or a board member is named in the suit. However if a lawsuit is filed to stop the board from running a certain activity, the directors and officers policy would respond. The majority of claims filed under a directors and officers policy arise from the employment process: wrongful termination, discrimination, workplace harassment, inadequate screening, and defamation.

Malpractice

If your organization has volunteers providing professional services, some form of malpractice or professional liability insurance may be desirable because other policies typically exclude professional services. The possibility of professional liability is generally the same in volunteer and employed positions.

Where should I go for more information?

If you are an organization using volunteers or a volunteer yourself and you have more questions about legal liability and/or insurance you may want to consult the following resources:

- a local volunteer center
- the local United Way office
- nonprofits associations
- an attorney
- an insurance professional
- The Nonprofits' Risk Management Center
  1001 Connecticut Avenue N.W.
  Suite 900
  Washington, D.C. 20036
  202/785-3891

Challenges

- **burnout**
- **firing**
- **lack of enthusiasm**

No activity is problem-free and the utilization of volunteers is no exception. Regardless of how much planning and screening has been completed before utilizing a volunteer, challenges will arise. However, with careful thought and consideration, solutions to these challenges need not be insurmountable. The following ideas are adapted from *Fostering Friendships: A Manual for Implementing a Volunteer Program that Pairs Community Members with Children with Disabilities*, by Elizabeth Cooley (Eugene, Oregon: Oregon Research Institute, 1989).

Motivation of volunteers is essential to any successful program. At some point in time, most people experience bouts of burnout. Paid workers have their paycheck to fall back on as an ongoing reward to get her/him through difficult times. Volunteers do not have this type of reinforcement, and when they get tired of the job or when things get difficult, they may decide it is time to quit—sometimes giving very short notice. Aside from offering other types of support suggested in this section, open channels of communication are essential. Volunteers need to feel that they can approach someone (a parent, teacher, staff member—whoever is their primary contact) at any time with both positive and negative feedback. Those who feel they can discuss negative feelings and experiences as readily as positive ones will be less likely to quit and more likely to work through their problems with you.

No matter how thoroughly a volunteer is screened, some individuals are simply not right for the job. Although this situation rarely occurs, when it does, it is often quite difficult to "fire" a volunteer. You may be concerned that you might not find anyone else, or be hesitant to discourage a good deed. However, it is sometimes necessary to change a volunteer's position or dismiss him/her altogether. It is helpful to keep a written record (e.g., attendance at meetings, follow-through, any feedback received by others) so that if it becomes necessary to dismiss a volunteer, you have concrete documentation to draw on. Of course, as in any dismissal situation, complaints should be discussed as they occur so that the volunteer might have time to improve or change a problematic situation.

In addition, lack of enthusiasm may discourage volunteers. For example, volunteers may receive little appreciation for their work. They must feel comfortable discussing concerns with the volunteer coordinator. Some volunteers have been providing a service for so long that people have begun taking it for granted. In this case, the staff may just need a reminder to let their volunteers know how much they are appreciated. The other possibility is that the volunteer services , at which time the organization together with the volunteer need to look for a new volunteer placement.

Coordinating Volunteers

**Remember:
the word "coordinate"
does not imply
"do it yourself"**

Crucial to any volunteer effort is good management. There are many kinds of volunteers and volunteer programs. The type of coordination necessary will vary according to the needs of the organization, the number of volunteers used and volunteers' skills and interests.

If one is only looking for one or two volunteers for some straightforward tasks, the amount of coordination could be part of one person's job. However, when developing a large volunteer pool, more in-depth coordination would be necessary. This may mean that one person must have a full-time job of coordinating volunteers, or it may mean that a group of individuals is responsible—each on a part-time basis to make up a full-time position.

If a group of people will be coordinating, each person ideally should have a specific responsibility. For example, a local church utilizes volunteers for its Sunday meal program, using three volunteer coordinators. One individual spends about ten hours a week concentrating on recruitment and scheduling issues, the second individual is in charge of setting up meals, while the third coordinates cleanup.

The word "coordinate" does not imply "do it yourself." Instead, a good coordinator will be able to develop a network of individuals who each have specific responsibilities. Many of these people may be selected by "piggy-backing" matching duties. For example, a school counselor who is required to have contact with each student may be delegated to distribute notices to those students he/she thinks are most appropriate for any given volunteer activity. The following example illustrates this point:

After several preventable crises, eleven citizens of Jonesville, a community of 40,000 people, got together to discuss what could be done about building more of a community around older citizens. Several of the team members decided that they would need a pool of volunteers who would be able to provide friendships, shopping assistance, and daily or weekly phone calls to the older members of the community.

None of the members of the committee had enough time to manage a volunteer pool alone, yet several were willing to take on smaller roles. One person volunteered to design a flier, two volunteered to act as phone contacts, and three others agreed to meet with existing community service organizations that might be able to provide an ongoing flow of volunteers. Finally, one individual with connections in the school system identified several community members who formed a lobbying group to work toward including volunteerism as part of the high school graduation requirements.

The end result for Jonesville was that two organizations (a high school honor society and a homemakers group) made a commitment to provide volunteers for older individuals on an as-needed basis. When they were not able to provide a volunteer from within their own groups, they recruited other individuals. One of the original concerned individuals agreed to have her number advertised as a contact for those people looking for assistance; she then would promptly contact one of the two organizations. Additionally, the school board designed an optional community service credit program in which students could earn credits toward graduation as well as a letter jacket; a high school social studies teacher agreed to oversee these volunteers.

Most of the job of a volunteer coordinator is (surprise!) coordinating! As in the example above, this does not mean the coordinator does everything. The first job should be identifying those individuals who can provide support. As in Jonesville, one individual could design fliers, another field phone calls, and a third might do outreach. A coordinator's job is to make certain that everyone is following through with their assigned tasks.

Remember: A good manager delegates!

As a Coordinator you will need to oversee:

1) establishment of local volunteer resources (ensure contact with agencies, organizations, schools and programs)

2) development of advertisements, presentations and job descriptions

3) orientation and training for volunteers (make sure it happens)

4) communication between volunteers and programs

5) meetings about volunteers

6) maintenance of volunteer records and other paperwork

7) provision of references as needed

Adapted from *Fostering Friendships: A Manual for Implementing a Volunteer Program that Pairs Community Members with Children with Disabilities* by Elizabeth Cooley (Eugene, Oregon: Oregon Research Institute, 1989).

Two volunteers on their way to a "clean-up-a-thon" to benefit Outdoor Explorations, an organization dedicated to assisting individuals with disabilities to access nature.

Qualities and Skills of a Good Coordinator

The following is adapted from *Foster Friendships: A Manual for Implementing a Volunteer Program that Pairs Community Members with Children with Disabilities* by Elizabeth Cooley (Eugene, Oregon: Oregon Research Institute, 1989).

General skills and personal qualities that are particularly useful as a volunteer coordinator include:

- clear verbal communication
- active listening
- good organizational habits
- personal warmth and enthusiasm
- concise written communication

Clear Verbal Communication

Coordinating volunteers is definitely a "people" job, and you will need to communicate verbally with others on innumerable occasions. Whether at a recruiting presentation to a university class, a training session, or a meeting with parents, you will need to express yourself clearly and concisely. Your audience should be able to grasp quickly and easily what your program entails and what will be expected of them should they become involved. It is a good idea to know basic cross-cultural traditions and mores. Many cultures have different customs for verbal and nonverbal (body language) communication. For example, many Asian groups **never** pat children on the head!

Active Listening

In meeting with volunteers, parents, and agency professionals, active listening is important. To be an effective listener, you should be able to empathize with a person's concerns and communicate that you have understood. This may sound easy, but in fact it takes quite a bit of energy and practice. A word of caution: overused phrases such as "What I hear you saying is . . ." or verbatim echoes of a person's words can make you sound more like a parrot than an empathetic listener. Anyone who has never received training in active listening is encouraged to do so.

Good Organizational Habits

A considerable amount of paperwork accompanies any program, and this one is no exception. You'll need to set up an efficient filing system in which, for example, you can readily find a particular mileage reimbursement form or check to see if a volunteer has turned in a permission form for a particular outing. Keep up with your paperwork. If you let stacks accumulate, you will be at a loss to find things later. Also keep track of current

legislation. For example, if you are not reimbursing for mileage, individuals may be able to make a tax deduction under "charitable contributions". Keep your volunteers informed.

Personal Warmth and Enthusiasm

Warmth and enthusiasm, while not exactly skills, are qualities that nonetheless are worth mentioning. Especially as you recruit volunteers and explain the program to parents, you'll find that people are more responsive if you yourself believe in the purpose of the program. You are, in effect, "selling" the program to potential participants, and your enthusiasm can be contagious. If you are not enthusiastic, others are unlikely to be eager to participate.

These same qualities can help to keep volunteers motivated throughout their involvement. Of course, one hopes that the experience of spending time with an individual will be motivating in itself. Keep in mind that you, as the coordinator, are *part* of that experience for each volunteer. Your continued warmth and support can encourage volunteers, particularly if they encounter any difficult situations.

Concise Written Communication

You may often find it necessary to correspond with various agencies, volunteers or parents. In addition, you may be asked to write letters of recommendation for volunteers. In any business correspondence, be brief. Articulate brevity can be very refreshing!

A local park was a mess before this group of volunteers came in to clean out garbage and redefine old trails. The cleanup was sponsored by Outdoor Explorations, an organization dedicated to enabling all individuals to access the wilderness. Individuals from Horizon Research, Inc., other local businesses, schools and human service agencies joined together for this day-long event.

A Crucial Ingredient

Reinforcement

Unlike paid employees, volunteers do not have the reward of a paycheck to encourage them. As the coordinator, you need to make certain that volunteers receive consistent, encouraging feedback either from your or others involved in their work such as parents, teachers or an activity leader). After a time, volunteers will begin to recognize signs of success independently, but your encouragement throughout their volunteer experience is important.

When volunteering together with an individual with a disability, volunteers without disabilities *may* need some extra feedback regarding their interactions with their partners. Some individuals with disabilities may be able to provide this feedback themselves—letting their partners know how much they enjoy volunteering together, and how helpful any assistance given has been. In some situations, a third party, such as a parent or staff person, may need to point out the feedback the individual with the disability is giving to the nondisabled partner. Comments such as "He's touching your shoulder, that means he likes you" or "Wow! She has been attentive for over 10 minutes—that's quite an accomplishment—she must really be having fun" are extremely helpful, especially to the volunteer who has no experience with people with disabilities.

A local volunteer helps tear down a dangerous clubhouse and carry it out of the woods.

101 Ways to Give Recognition to Volunteers

by Vern Lake
Volunteer Services Consultant, Minnesota Department of Public Welfare

Listed below are 101 possibilities [for reinforcement] gathered from hither and yon. The duplication at 1 and 101 is for emphasis. The blank at 102 is for the beginning of your own list. It is important to remember that recognition is not so much something you do as it is something you are. It is a sensitivity to others as persons, not a strategy for discharging obligations.

1. Smile.
2. Put up a volunteer suggestion box.
3. Treat volunteers to a soda.
4. Reimburse assignment-related expenses.
5. Ask for a report.
6. Send a birthday card.
7. Arrange for discounts.
8. Give service stripes.
9. Maintain a coffee bar.
10. Plan annual ceremonial occasions.
11. Invite volunteers to staff meeting.
12. Recognize personal needs and problems.
13. Accommodate personal needs and problems.
14. Be pleasant.
15. Use volunteers in an emergency situation.
16. Provide a baby sitter.
17. Post Honor Roll in reception area.
18. Respect their wishes.
19. Give informal teas.
20. Keep challenging them.
21. Send a Thanksgiving Day card to the volunteer's family.
22. Provide a nursery.
23. Say "good morning."
24. Greet by name.
25. Provide good preservice training.
26. Help develop self-confidence.
27. Award plaques to sponsoring group.
28. Take time to explain fully.
29. Be verbal.
30. Motivate agency VIPs to converse with them.
31. Hold rap sessions.
32. Give additional responsibility.
33. Invite participation in team planning.
34. Respect individual sensitivities.
35. Enable to grow on the job.
36. Enable to grow out of the job.
37. Send newsworthy information to the media.
38. Have wine-and-cheese-tasting parties.
39. Ask client-patient to evaluate their work-service.
40. Say "good afternoon."
41. Honor their preferences.
42. Create pleasant surroundings.
43. Welcome to staff coffee breaks.
44. Enlist volunteers to train other volunteers.
45. Have a public reception.

46. Take time to talk.
47. Defend against hostile or negative staff.
48. Create effective plans.
49. Commend to supervisory staff.
50. Send a valentine.
51. Make thorough prearrangements.
52. Persuade "personnel" to equate volunteer experience with work experience.
53. Admit to partnership with paid staff.
54. Recommend to prospective employer.
55. Provide scholarships to volunteer conferences or workshops.
56. Offer advocacy roles.
57. Utilize as consultants.
58. Write thank-you notes.
59. Invite participation in policy formulation.
60. Surprise with coffee and cake.
61. Celebrate outstanding projects and achievements.
62. Nominate for volunteer awards.
63. Have a "President's Day" for new presidents of sponsoring groups.
64. Carefully match volunteer with job.
65. Praise them to their friends.
66. Provide substantive inservice training.
67. Provide useful tools in good working condition.
68. Say "goodnight."
69. Plan staff and volunteer social events.
70. Be a *real* person.
71. Rent billboard space for public laudation.
72. Accept their individuality.
73. Provide opportunities for conferences and evaluation.
74. Identify age groups.
75. Maintain meaningful file.
76. Send impromptu fun cards.
77. Plan occasional extravaganzas.
78. Instigate client-planned surprises.
79. Utilize purchased newspaper space.
80. Promote a "Volunteer-of-the-Month" program.
81. Send letter of appreciation to employer.
82. Plan a "Recognition Edition" of the agency newsletter.
83. Color-code name tags to indicate particular achievements (hours, years, unit, etc.).
84. Send commendatory letters to prominent public figures.
85. Say "we missed you."
86. Praise the sponsoring group or club.
87. Promote staff smiles.
88. Facilitate personal maturation.
89. Distinguish between groups and individuals in the group.
90. Maintain safe working conditions.
91. Adequately orientate.
92. Award special citations for extraordinary achievements.
93. Fully indoctrinate regarding the agency.
94. Send holiday cards.
95. Be familiar with the details of assignments.
96. Conduct community-wide, cooperative, interagency recognition events.
97. Plan a theater party.
98. Attend a sports event.
99. Have a picnic.
100. Say "thank you."
101. Smile.
102.

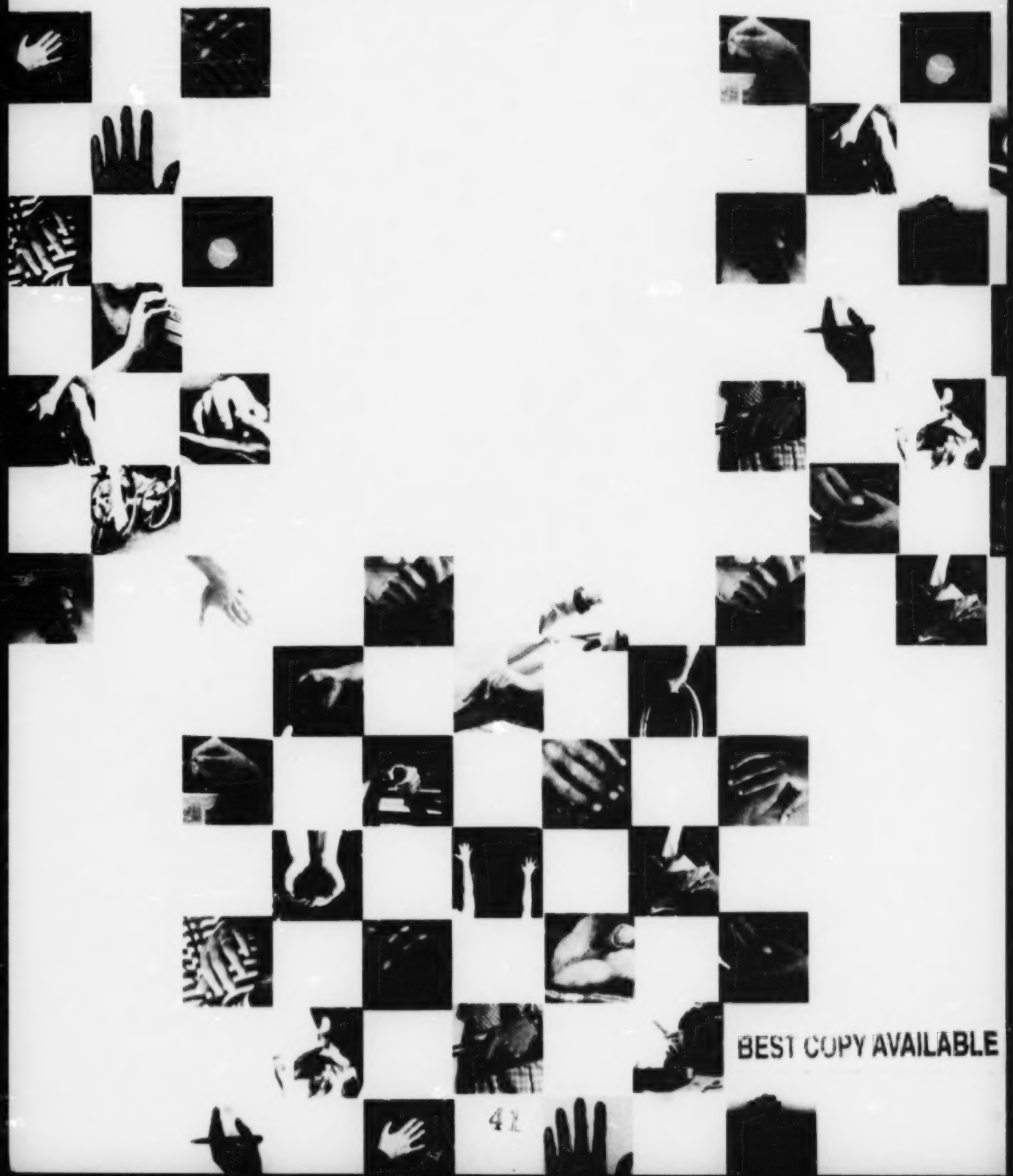
28 Ways for a Volunteer to Help

- communicating
- interacting with peers
- transporting
- getting activity supplies
- modifying rules
- going to the restroom
- purchasing
- offering choices
- teaching others about an individual
- reinforcing others in interactions
- being a friend
- eating
- changing
- leading an activity
- organizing an activity
- getting to an activity
- teaching communication systems
- acting as a model for interaction
- setting limits
- offering disability awareness
- answering questions
- suggesting adaptations
- developing assistive devices
- setting up
- cleaning up
- making introductions
- understanding rules
- scheduling

A Volunteer Should Be:

- **punctual**
- **responsible**
- **energetic**
- **cheerful**
- **optimistic**
- **encouraging**

As a youth in his late teens, Brian loved summer camp, but was too old to continue as a camper. He decided to join the Counselor in Training (CIT) program, where he would learn about group management, first aid and other counselor responsibilities for half of each day and volunteer with a counselor and his/her group for the rest of the day.



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